

Newsletter

VILLA I TATTI

THE HARVARD UNIVERSITY CENTER
FOR ITALIAN RENAISSANCE STUDIES
FLORENCE, ITALY

January 1966

This letter, addressed to friends of Villa I Tatti, is intended to give some account of developments since the opening of the Harvard Center in 1961 and prospects for the future.

I. Fellows and Visiting Scholars

The number of Fellows appointed to the Center has grown from six in the autumn of 1961 to eleven in the present academic year. Most of these scholars have completed the doctorate and are engaged in writing books on subjects in the field of the Italian Renaissance. They are selected from many different institutions in the United States and Europe in accordance with Mr. Berenson's wish that the Center be international. This year there are four Fellows from Italy, one from Austria, and six from the United States. About half the Fellows are in the field of art history and the others in the history of literature, philosophy, or religion, or in the social and political background of the period. The Fellows do not live in the Villa but are provided with individual studies there and have the opportunity to take lunch every day.

There is no permanent faculty, but in addition to the Director there is now every year in residence a visiting art historian. During the academic year 1964-65 this position was occupied by Professor Millard Meiss of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. This year Professor Frederick Hartt of the Fine Arts Department of the Uni-

versity of Pennsylvania will serve for the first half year and Professor Benjamin Rowland, Jr. of Harvard for the second. Other distinguished scholars in the diverse fields of Renaissance studies are invited during the year to be guests at the Villa for periods ranging from a week to a month. Among such guests in 1964-65 have been: James Ackerman, Professor of Fine Arts, Harvard University; Hans Baron, the Newberry Library; T. G. R. Boase, President of Magdalen College, Oxford; I. Bernard Cohen, Professor of the History of Science, Harvard University; Cecil Grayson, Serena Professor of Italian Literature, Oxford University; Denys Hay, Professor of History, Edinburgh University; Guido Kisch, Professor of History, University of Basel; Rensselaer Lee, Professor of Art History, Princeton University; John Pope-Hennessy, Victoria and Albert Museum; Philip Pouncey, British Museum; John Ward Perkins, British School at Rome; Federico Zeri, Rome.

Thus a feature of the scholarly life at I Tatti is that the Fellows who are writing monographs on special topics have an opportunity to meet distinguished older scholars and to engage in informal conversations with these visitors as well as with the other Fellows. It is natural that a man who is working on the frescoes of Domenico Ghirlandaio in which appear so many portraits of Florentine citizens should find common ground with a student of the social and political life of Florence in the age of Lorenzo the Magnificent; but even in cases where the convergence of interests is not so direct, stimulating suggestions have been exchanged and horizons broadened. Many of the visiting scholars have written to say how much they feel their own work has profited from their conversations with the Fellows.

From time to time more formal lectures are offered. A recent one which aroused great interest was given by Dr. Frances Yates of the Warburg Institute on « Art and the Art of Memory in the Middle Ages ».

In addition to the daily lunches there is arranged every year a series of larger dinners to which are invited members of the Florentine community. Guests are especially welcome from the University, the Soprintendenza, the

galleries, the libraries, and the other foreign institutes. On special occasions, such as the Dante Convegno and the seminar for art historians at the Kunsthistorisches Institut, receptions have been held at I Tatti. The program of concerts begun under the direction of Professor Kenneth Murdock has been continued, and two or three concerts are scheduled during the season.

Among scholarly projects under way at the Villa special mention should be made of the edition of the correspondence of Lorenzo de' Medici. Some years ago this edition was sponsored by the international collaboration of the Istituto di Studi sul Rinascimento in Italy, the Warburg Institute in England, and the Renaissance Society of America. Professors Nicolai Rubinstein and Giorgio Ricci were entrusted with the preparation of a check-list of all the known letters. This was published in 1964 and it is now proposed to proceed with the edition in a first volume of about four hundred letters. Riccardo Fubini, who was last year a Fulbright Fellow at I Tatti, is this year supported by a grant from the Renaissance Society of America and will devote his time to preparing the historical commentary for the first volume under the direction of Professors Rubinstein and Ricci. In order to facilitate his work the entire file of photostats of Lorenzo's letters which had been assembled at the Istituto in Palazzo Strozzi has been transferred to a room at I Tatti and to it will be added all the new material discovered in archives other than the Archivio di Stato at Florence. Thus for the period while this work continues, I Tatti will have on loan a uniquely valuable collection of photostats and microfilm.

II. *The Library*

The nucleus of the Berenson Library was the collection of books and photographs on Italian painting of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Berenson, however, saw the flowering of the visual arts in Italy as only one chapter, if a climactic one, in the whole history of Mediterranean civilization from antiquity to the fifteenth century, when

the classical inheritance was re-formulated and transmitted to the northern European countries. Hence the library was conceived as illustrating the cultural evolution of the Mediterranean world beginning with the legacies of Israel, Greece, and Rome and continuing in the Middle Ages with Byzantium, the Arab world and western Christianity. The section of Classical and Near-Eastern archeology became especially strong. For purposes of comparison and also because of the standards it represented, Berenson brought together a considerable collection on Far Eastern art. Furthermore, his original interests had been in comparative religion, literature, and philosophy, and these fields came to be represented by many of the standard works. Most of the classics of the literatures of England, France, Germany, and Italy down through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were acquired together with a large number of modern histories, biographies and memoirs. Thus the library came to be a reflection of the wide-ranging interests of its creator. By the time of his death Berenson had amassed a library of some 50,000 volumes.

When the Harvard Center opened in 1961, Mr. Michael Rinehart was appointed Librarian, and he served until July, 1964 when he was succeeded by Mr. Martin Faigel.

The limitation of the scope of the Harvard Center to the period of the Renaissance, however broadly conceived, was more restricted than Berenson had indicated in his plans for the future, but it seemed justified to concentrate on the field in which the library was strongest and in which there was also ample opportunity for studying those relationships between artistic and intellectual history which had been characteristic of Berenson's interests.

These considerations have dictated the policies applied to the growth of the library. Few acquisitions can be made outside the area of Renaissance studies. The rich collection on the Italian schools of painting is augmented each year so far as available funds permit so that this part of the library, so closely related to the photographic collection, may be maintained as a unique instrument of research. Fewer works are bought on sculpture and archi-

itecture. All of the periodicals to which the library previously subscribed have been maintained. In the fields of Renaissance history, literature, music, and science the holdings of the library need to be increased. However, it would of course be impossible to create a great research library in every field of Renaissance studies and, even if feasible, it would not be justified in view of the rich collections existing in Florence which are available to the Fellows at I Tatti. The aim of the Berenson Library is rather to provide the scholars who are working in the house with some of the basic sources, the indispensable reference books and important recent monographs in the areas with which they are concerned. This implies a steady and modest expansion of the collection.

Housed in the library are Berenson's manuscripts and correspondence, which were left by him to Nicky Mariano, his literary executor, and which may be consulted with her permission. The collection contains letters from some twelve hundred friends and acquaintances ranging over a period of more than sixty years and including besides figures of the art-historical world, many of the most important novelists, poets, historians, philosophers, and statesmen of the twentieth century. On the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of Berenson's birth, Villa I Tatti has published a preliminary inventory of this correspondence so that interested scholars may have detailed information on this great collection of source material for the intellectual and social history of Berenson's generation.

Special gifts have been made during the past two years by F. Gordon Morrill and his wife Elizabeth Morrill for the purchase of books in Renaissance music. This subject was unrepresented in the Berenson Library and, although Florence is rich in primary sources for musicologists, a good modern reference library is lacking. The generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Morrill and their promise of future support ensure the development of a basic collection of sources and literature on Renaissance music.

The fund for this collection has also been augmented by a substantial gift from Countess Antonia della Gherardesca d'Oncieu.

These gifts coincide with the appointment this year of the first I Tatti Fellow in musicology, made possible by the transfer from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of the de Dombrowski bequest.

The construction of a separate entrance has permitted the opening of the library to all qualified students who desire to consult it. Hours are 9:00-1:00 and 2:30-6:00, Monday through Friday, and 9:00-1:00 on Saturday.

III. *The Photograph Collection*

As early as 1895 Berenson began to collect photographs of the paintings he was studying. By the time of his death he had amassed some 50,000 photographs of the Italian schools of painting alone, as well as a large number on architecture and sculpture, and on the northern schools. The collection is of inestimable value for historians of art as it contains many unique photographs taken before a given fresco or panel was cleaned, restored, or in some cases, lost or destroyed.

On the initiative of Professor Sydney Freedberg of Harvard University a grant was made to the Fine Arts Department from the Harvard Graduate Society for Advanced Study and Research to finance the filming and reproduction of the photographs of the Italian schools. The photographs were taken on 35mm. film from which 4" x 6" prints could be made. Fourteen institutions have subscribed to receive these sets of prints. At first the photographing was done by a professional firm in Florence and the printing of the copies at the Fogg Museum in Cambridge. This proved expensive and time-consuming, and last year a photographic laboratory was installed at I Tatti. Production has been uneven due to the difficulty of finding a photographer who is willing to undertake this job for a prolonged period of time. However, sets have now been made of about one-fifth of the collection and the immediate prospect for continuing production is good. There is unanimous testimony to the value of these prints for teaching purposes,

even in cases where Berenson's attributions have been successfully challenged.

The future housing of the whole photographic collection at I Tatti has presented a problem. The photographs have been stored in cupboards in the library where they are arranged in folders according to the organization of the Berenson Lists. Within each folder are photographs, old and new, large and small, with reconstructed polyptychs clipped together, and interleaved notes and letters by Berenson and his assistants. While this arrangement was possible for one scholar working with a few assistants, it is not feasible now that larger numbers of art historians are consulting the collection. In order to preserve the photographs they must be arranged in more permanent filing cases or boxes, and the unique ones should ideally be mounted or protected by an individual folder. Recommendations to this effect were made last year by Professors Millard Meiss and James Ackerman, and the University has authorized the preparation of plans for converting the present garage into a Photographic Library. The plan is to build a corridor across the back of the present garage courtyard so that the collection, properly housed in the new location, will be readily available from the library. Plans for the new construction are in course of preparation.

Mrs. Luisa Vertova Nicolson, whose years of experience in the library have given her an unrivalled knowledge of the collection, will work this year on building up the system of cross-references in order to facilitate consultation of the photographs. She will also be consultant on the new acquisitions. Her work will be in part supported by a generous gift from Professor Felton Gibbons of Princeton University who was associated with I Tatti, 1964-65.

IV. *The Paintings*

The collection of Italian painting of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, acquired by Berenson almost entirely between 1900 and 1914, is hung in the

corridors and living rooms of the Villa with few changes from the arrangement made in his lifetime.

In the autumn of 1964 the collection was carefully inspected by Professor Millard Meiss and Professor Ugo Procacci, Superintendent of the Fine Arts Administration of Florence. This examination showed that eighteen pictures had suffered varying degrees of damage from the dry central heat and were in need of treatment. Professor Procacci arranged to entrust this task to a group of his assistants and the work was accomplished in December and January of last year. In order to prevent further damage from the effect of central heat, Professors Meiss and Procacci advised that it was necessary to install humidifiers, and five machines were accordingly acquired and put in operation last winter.

The collection is shown by appointment to small guided tours on Wednesday afternoons during the winter months and on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays during July and August. The number of visitors who have taken advantage of these tours has continued to mount. During the past year more than 1500 individuals made appointments, and in addition special tours were arranged for groups from a number of universities, colleges, and museums. Additional visitors saw the collection as guests of the Director, the Professor of Art History or one of the Fellows. Thus the total number of visitors was well over two thousand.

V. The Garden

In the beginning of Harvard's administration of I Tatti the garden suffered some neglect because the available funds had to be applied to scholarships and the needs of the library. During the past two years gifts for current expenses for the garden from Mrs. Ellery Sedgwick, Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss and Mr. Henry McIlhenny have made it possible to replace box and arbor-vitae which had been winter-killed and to repair eroded stone steps and balustrades. It is hoped that the present condition of the garden can be maintained.

In addition to being shown on the regular tours, the garden is visited by the special excursions arranged in May and June to view the gardens of the Florentine Villas.

VI. The Financial Position

The income from the Berenson estate is now approximately \$65,000 per year.

In order to meet the needs of the Center the original Advisory Committee recommended an additional endowment of \$2,000,000. In the autumn of 1961 the University launched an appeal to raise this amount as a *Fund for I Tatti*.

To this fund an anonymous donor has contributed \$500,000 on the condition that the drive be completed by November 1967.

In January of 1964 the Harvard Corporation transferred to the *Fund for I Tatti* the de Dombrowski bequest of approximately \$289,000, which had been received by the University in 1955, to be applied primarily to the study of Italian art and music.

Gifts to the *Fund* from all other sources amount to \$317,159 (including capital appreciation).

Thus the drive has passed the half-way mark towards the sum originally projected.

In addition to income from endowment, I Tatti has also received the following gifts to be expended during a term of years:

From the Kress Foundation, \$10,000 a year for five years for a fellowship in the history of art and for the purchase of books in the history of art for the library.

From the Old Dominion Foundation, \$10,000 a year for five years for a fellowship and for the purchase of books for the library.

From the Gulbenkian Foundation, \$2,500 a year for five years to support the expenses of European scholars invited to I Tatti for short visits.

VII. *Financial Needs*

1. *Fellowships.* The Berenson bequest was not sufficient to provide stipends for the Fellows appointed to I Tatti and for this reason scholars were at first named to fellowships who had already received grants from other sources such as Guggenheim, Fulbright, or A.C.L.S. awards for work in Florence. With the increasing endowment now available, about half the Fellows are this year provided with I Tatti funds. If the grants from the Kress and Old Dominion Foundations are not continued beyond the period of five years, it will be important to accumulate additional endowment for fellowships. While it will always be possible and often desirable to invite the recipient of a Guggenheim or other grant to be a member of the I Tatti community, we shall have more independence and shall be able to make more provision for European scholars if we have our own funds. In the case of Americans, given the number of opportunities that now exist in the United States for supporting younger scholars for one year abroad, it has been sensibly suggested that the I Tatti fellowships might often be devoted to offering a second year to those who have begun promising work in Florence but are not able to secure a renewal of their grants.

2. *Publication.* The I Tatti Committee hopes to be able to publish a modest annual volume. This might include a résumé of the year's activities with accounts of the informal lectures given from time to time by the Fellows or visiting scholars. It has been suggested that there is a place for a publication entirely devoted to the sources and documents discovered by the Fellows in the various archives in the course of their work. Properly annotated and indexed, such a publication would be of interest to scholars in every field of Renaissance studies.

3. *The Library.* A considerable portion of the library's acquisition budget is committed each year to the necessary maintenance of periodicals and serials. The gifts from the Kress and Old Dominion Foundations have made it possible to initiate the kind of selective buying in current

publications without which the library would lose much of its usefulness for scholarship. However, if we are to realize fully the policies outlined above it is clear that additional endowment is needed.

4. *The Photograph Collection.* The usefulness of the collection will obviously be increased insofar as it is possible to keep it up to date by the acquisition of new photographs, including not only new discoveries, but also such important works of restoration as, for example, the recent work on the Piero della Francesca cycle at Arezzo. A part of the endowment must accordingly be allocated to the acquisition of new photographs as well as to the maintenance and new organization of the present collection.

5. *The Garden.* Some income from the endowment should be allocated to the gardens if they are to be maintained on a satisfactory standard.

VIII. *Summary*

We are hopeful that in the coming months we can obtain the balance of the endowment fund originally proposed. At the distribution rate presently maintained by the Treasurer of Harvard College, an additional million dollars would bring in an income of \$50,000 annually. This might be allocated in the following manner:

For scholarships: \$20,000 (the stipends should be adjustable to individual needs rather than being fixed).

For publication: \$10,000.

Library: \$10,000.

Photographs: \$7,000.

Maintenance of collection: \$1,000.

Garden: \$2,000.

Myron P. Gilmore
Nicky Mariano

Fellows and Associates of I Tatti, 1961-66

Roberto Abbondanza, History, 1964-5.
Mina Bacci, Art History, 1965-6.
Marvin Becker, History, 1963-4.
Sergio Bertelli, History, 1965-6.
Ludovico Borgo, Art History, 1963-5.
Howard Brown, Music History, 1963-4.
Gene Brucker, History, 1964-5.
Anthony Caputi, Literature, 1964-5.
Cecil Clough, History, 1963-4.
Eric Cochrane, History, 1961-2.
Elio Conti, History, 1963-4.
Dario Covi, Art History, 1964-5.
Colin Eisler, Art History, 1962-3.
Everett Fahy, Art History, 1964-6.
Francis Fergusson, Literature, 1963-4.
John Freccero, Literature, 1961-2.
Riccardo Fubini, History, 1964-6.
Felton Gibbons, Art History, 1964-5.
Creighton Gilbert, Art History, 1962-3.
Guglielmina Gregori, Art History, 1963-5.
James Haar, Music History, 1965-6.
John Hale, History, 1962-3.
Robert Hatfield, Art History, 1964-6.
Detlef Heikamp, Art History, 1963-4.
David Herlihy, History, 1961-2.
Sears Jayne, Literature, 1962-3.
Myron Laskin, Jr., Art History, 1965-6.
Michael Mahoney, Art History, 1962-3.
Lauro Martines, History, 1962-5.

Konrad Oberhuber, Art History, 1965-6.
Janet Cox Rearick (Mrs. H. Wiley Hitchcock), Art History,
1961-3.
William Robert Rearick, Art History, 1961-3.
Peter Riesenbergh, History, 1964-5.
Lawrence Ryan, Literature, 1963-4.
Howard Saalman, Art History, 1963-5.
Curtis Shell, Art History, 1961-2.
Irving Singer, Philosophy, 1965-6.
James Snyder, Art History, 1962-3.
Randolph Starn, History, 1964-6.
Francesco Tateo, Literature, 1965-6.
Richard Turner, Art History, 1963-4.
Donald Weinstein, History, 1962-3.
Hayden White, Literature, 1961-2.

Advisory Committee on Villa I Tatti, 1965-66

Robert Lee Wolff, Coolidge Professor of History, Harvard University, *Chairman*.

James Ackerman, Professor of Fine Arts, Harvard University.

Douglas Bryant, University Librarian, Harvard University.

Felix Gilbert, Professor of History, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.

Cecil Grayson, Serena Professor of Italian Studies, Oxford University.

Millard Meiss, Professor of Art History, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.

Nino Pirrotta, Naumburg Professor of Music, Harvard University.

Benjamin Rowland, Jr., Gleason Professor of Fine Arts, Harvard University.

Contributions to the *Fund for I Tatti* may be sent to Villa I Tatti, Via di Vincigliata 26, Florence, Italy, or to the Treasurer's Office, Harvard University, 24 Milk Street, Boston, Massachusetts. Checks should be made out to Harvard University, and it should be specified that the gift is to be applied to the *Fund for I Tatti*.